

This Week in Congress

January 28, 2008

Dear Friend,

Welcome to this "This Week in Congress." Congress has a short week due to a Democrat retreat. I am returning to Washington, D.C., today for votes and the President's State of the Union. I will continue my Big First Listening Tour upon returning to Kansas on Wednesday. I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Companies Announce Closures in Kansas Communities

The week started with an announcement in my hometown of Plainville that Schult Homes, a subsidiary of Clayton Homes based in Tennessee, will be closing its Plainville operation effective at the end of March. Schult Homes has been a major employer in Rooks County since it opened in 1968. The week ended with an announcement by Tyson Foods, Inc. that it would stop beef slaughter operations at its Emporia facility within the next few weeks. Tyson is a

significant part of Emporia's community and contributes greatly to its economy. These announcements are both very concerning and reflect an issue I have worked on since my first day in Congress.

The decision in Plainville results in the loss of approximately 150 jobs. In Emporia, the news means that approximately 1,500 jobs currently at the plant will be lost. Emporia will still be the site of a Tyson cold storage and distribution warehouse and will process ground beef.

My goal has always been to see good things happen in rural America. Our communities are made up of good people and have a lot to offer businesses. I am actively engaged in discussions with local officials as we attempt to soften the blow that these announcements have caused. In addition, I am partnering with local leaders as Plainville and the surrounding communities look to attract another major employer and for opportunities to expand good paying jobs in the Emporia business community.

President to Deliver State of the Union Tonight

President Bush will deliver his final State of the Union address tonight where he is expected to mention the rebuilding efforts underway in Greensburg. Greensburg City Administrator Steve Hewitt will be a special guest of the President tonight and will be sitting with First Lady Laura Bush during the speech. He and his wife, Kim, were in my office this morning to take a tour of the Capitol building. Kansas Wesleyan University President Dr. Philip Kerstetter will be my

guest at the speech this evening.

There are many issues on the minds of Kansans that I hope the President will address tonight, including his economic stimulus package, energy, health care and the war in Iraq.

Congress Considering Package to Stimulate the Economy

Congress is considering a package to stimulate the economy by giving American wage earners a rebate check and extending tax breaks for businesses. Any money rebated will be borrowed and increases the national debt. Some believe we are spending money we do not have. Some believe the additional rebate dollars will be spent and improve the economy. Please visit my Web site to vote in an online poll as to whether Congress should issue these rebates or not.

New Policy Will Save Energy and Money

With the start of the New Year, I implemented a series of changes to the way my office does business in order to become more energy efficient and save taxpayer dollars. By making several easy changes, my office is using less energy and saving money with the result being an office that is more environmentally friendly. Some of the actions I have taken include replacing incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent lights, utilizing the power-save functions on office equipment and making a commitment to purchase electronic equipment with the *Energy Star* label. I have also had sensors installed in my office to turn off the lights when no one is in the room.

With rising energy prices, we all can do things to reduce our energy use. More information about some of the actions I have taken as well as changes you can make to save energy and money are listed on my [Web site](#) .

Visiting with Business Leaders at Salina Area Chamber of Commerce Meeting

This week, I attended the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce annual meeting and dinner. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with business leaders in the Salina community and also listen to Baseball Hall of Fame member Cal Ripkin Jr. give his thoughts on the traits needed to become a successful person.

Attending the Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars Mid-Winter Conference

On Saturday, I attended the Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Mid-Winter Conference in Topeka. This provided me the opportunity to update members of the VFW and VFW Auxiliary on issues such as the recent mileage rate increase. I appreciate the service and advocacy of the VFW and other veterans service organizations in our state. Thanks to Kansas VFW Adjutant Larry Graham for the invitation and for his hospitality.

Spending Time in Hays

I spoke at the First United Methodist Church of Hays on Sunday about my experiences while visiting the Darfur region of Sudan last year. The church is studying the topic of social justice and the plight of orphans in Africa. Since returning from Darfur, my goal has been to share my experiences with as many people as I can reach to shed light on the situation. I appreciate the leadership of Dr. Lynn Fisher and the youth for organizing Sunday's services.

Later that day, I attended the Soup-R-Bowl Food Festival at the Ellis County Fairgrounds. This annual event features soup recipes from several local individuals, businesses and community groups. The proceeds benefit the Humane Society of the High Plains.

Big First Listening Tour Continues

I continued my listening tour with several stops this week. I visited Mankato, Downs, Beloit, Lincoln, Bennington, Ellsworth, Bushton, Rexford and Selden. My tour will continue this week with several stops. They are scheduled as follows:

Wednesday, January 30

Nemaha County Tour Stop, Seneca

Time: 8:30-9:30 a.m.

Location: Country Place Senior Living, 1700 Community Dr.

Washington County Tour Stop, Washington

Time: 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Location: Mayberry's Restaurant, 307 C St.

Geary County Tour Stop, Junction City

Time: 1:15-2:15 p.m.

Location: Larry Dixon Center for Innovative Studies, 920 W. 6th St.

Thursday, January 31

Smith County Tour Stop, Gaylord

Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m.

Location: Gaylord Community Center, Main Room, 509 Main St.

Phillips County Tour Stop, Phillipsburg

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Location: Rotary Club, Branding Iron Restaurant, 1310 State St.

Russell County Tour Stop, Russell

Time: 8:00-9:00 p.m.

Location: Russell Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting, AmericInn, 1430 S. Fossil St.

Friday, February 1

Edwards County Tour Stop, Kinsley

Time: 9:00-10:00 a.m.

Location: City Hall Community Room, 721 Marsh St.

Stafford County Tour Stop, Macksville

Time: 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Location: Macksville High School, Library, 417 N. Gilmore St.

Saturday, February 2

Trego County Tour Stop, WaKeeney

Time: 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Location: Western Cooperative Electric, Community Room, 635 13th St.

Monday, February 4

Barton County Tour Stop, Great Bend

Time: 12:00-1:00 p.m.

Location: Rotary Club, Highland Hotel, 3017 W. 10th

[Click here](#) to stay up-to-date on stops still being scheduled.

In the Office

Daryl Larson of McPherson stopped by with the U.S. Cattlemen's Association to talk about the farm bill, beef trade with Argentina and the beef check off program. Kansas Right to Life representatives visited the Capitol to advocate for pro-life legislation and the rights of the unborn, as well as to participate in the Right to Life March. Curt Musgrave of Kansas City was in with the Plasma Enhanced Melter Program to discuss new technology that will be implemented in Geary County to dispose of garbage and other waste. Dain Roose-Snyder and Rob Hartwell of Edenspace in Junction City were in to discuss funding for cellulosic ethanol research.

Very truly yours,

Jerry